

Taimi Piin-Aaspõllu 03.09.1940–02.09.2012 in memoriam



Foto: Tarmo Niitla

Taimi Piin-Aaspõllu graduated from the Biology Department of the Faculty of Biology and Geography of Tartu State University in 1964. Her diligence noted at secondary school was well evident also during her studies at the university. At the time, the faculty professors included numerous renowned scientists-botanists (Academician August Vaga, future professors and Academicians Hans-Voldemar Trass, Erast Parmasto, Viktor Masing etc.) who undoubtedly influenced the career choices of many students, including that of Taimi. The students were encouraged to undertake research already during their first years of studies. Thus also Taimi took active part in the expeditions to study the plant cover in Karaganda District, Kazakhstan. Having taken serious interest in lichens, she had already before the graduation become a specialist of the crustose

lichen genus *Pertusaria* which also constituted the subject of her diploma thesis. Taimi's thesis was highly evaluated by her reviewer Erast Parmasto as well as by the whole Student Paper Award Committee who considered it to be worthy of the first prize. It thus seemed her future following graduation was destined to be related with lichenological studies. Research, indeed, took her for several years to the Kola Peninsula with its rich lichen flora. However, the period was not followed by a respective dissertation, as Taimi with her heightened sense of self-criticism always considered the achieved results to be insufficient. Following the fieldwork on the Kola Peninsula, Taimi returned to the University of Tartu where she developed significant lichen herbarium and participated in the teaching in the Department of Botany. Her work included

the research of species difficult to define, the management of collections and the supervision of student theses. She cooperated with other researchers in Estonia and Russia – the Botanical Institute of the Academy of Sciences of USSR and the Institute of Soil Sciences in Leningrad where she was highly regarded for her expertise in tundra lichens. Soon, however, Taimi was forced to make a career move and she took up a new, long-term job at the Tallinn Botanical Gardens. Her extensive experience in fieldwork and the development of the herbarium proved pertinent also in her new position and so for years she worked as the curator of the considerable plant collections of the Botanical Gardens. Nordic areas continued to have an appeal to Taimi and she undertook several expeditions to Taymyr and Chukotka. In cooperation with geobotanist Nadezhda Matveyeva and soil microbiologist Olga Parinkina she conducted successful studies on the influence of lichens, the primary successions of terricolous lichens

and tundra species on soil microbiocoenosis. The distribution of terricolous lichens of Taymyr provided the subject for Taimi's various separate articles as well as studies conducted in cooperation.

As the herbarium curator at the Tallinn Botanical Gardens, she became one of the pathfinders in natural science education, especially in organising exhibitions of fungi and lichens – the tradition enthusiastically continued for years, if not decades.

Taimi Piin-Aaspõllu was a renowned representative of the Estonian school of lichenologists whose passion for lichens set an example for many of us. She was a long-term member of the International Association for Lichenology (IAL), and was awarded the Order of the National Coat of Arms, 5th Class.

Jüri Martin